

Spode Copeland USNA plates

Dear Mr. Cheevers.

Thank you so very much for your prompt, informative, and professional response to my inquiry re: the USNA dinner plates acquired by my parents. Your description is more detailed than I could have accomplished if I had all the plates sitting in front of me. Thus, my plates are indeed the Copeland Spode china as you surmised and described..

I will inform my family of your information by this e-mail and plan to include your information in an addendum to my will.

With my appreciation,

- Mike Blackledge

Mike@Blackledge.com

Michael Allan Blackledge, USNA '63

Dec 26, 2007 02:28:41 PM, cheevers@usna.edu wrote:

Michael A. Blackledge:

I want to thank you for your message and thoughtful consideration of the U.S. Naval Academy Museum concerning a collection of 12 dinner plates decorated with the USNA coat of arms and scenes of the Naval Academy that were most likely acquired by your parents, Class of 1920, about the time of their wedding in 1934.

I believe that these dinner plates are the U.S. Naval Academy Copeland Spode china produced for and sold by the Bailey, Banks and Biddle Company in the 1930s. In 1932, in anticipation of the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Naval Academy in 1935, the Bailey, Banks and Biddle Company, Philadelphia, which for many years had been making jewelry and medals for the U.S. Navy, the Naval Academy, and other military and patriotic organizations commissioned Copeland Spode of England to produce a set of six commemorative dinner plates showing scenes in the Naval Academy Yard. The plates are 10 ½ inches in diameter and were produced in black on white china.

Each plate is marked on the underside in black with the title of the scene, the seal of Bailey, Banks, and Biddle Co., copyright BB&B Co., 1932, and trademark of Copeland Spode, England. The six scenes in the center of the six different plates are: (Sampson, Mahan, and Maury Halls), Bancroft Hall, New Main Gate, Naval Academy Chapel, Rotunda of Bancroft Hall, and Dress Parade of Midshipmen. The two inch, raised edge of all plates is decorated from the top clockwise with: U.S. Naval Academy coat of arms; a motif of seaweeds; a full, forward face of a bearded Neptune topped with a trident and an anchor below; the seaweed motif; the Tripoli Monument; seaweed; a ship's wheel; seaweed; the figurehead of USS Delaware (Tecumseh) inside of which is "1932" over "BB&B Co."; seaweed; repeat of Neptune; seaweed; the Mexican War Monument; seaweed; repeat of ship's wheel; and seaweed. The "Tecumseh" and the were then, in 1932, and remain today prominent displays on the grounds. The outside rim of each plate is further

decorated with a rope, a water wave pattern, and two additional narrow black bands, one opened and one solid.

The number of these plates produced and their sale dates are unknown. Based on inquiries received over the years, they are considerably more rare than the commemorative Wedgwood china with similar central yard scenes and originally produced at about the same time, but for much longer and certainly in much larger quantities. The has a complete set of the USNA Copeland Spode china donated in 1978 (see USNA 78.26.2-7.)

If the above description fits your parent's plates, then the has a complete set, and you can turn your generosity towards you son and/or fellow classmates. If they are different, we would very much appreciate keeping our hat in the ring when you add them to your will.

Thank you again for thinking of the . With best wishes. Jim Cheevers.

James W. Cheevers

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To assist with Question 1, I offer the following, which includes a detailed professional description of the Spode pattern from Jim Cheevers of our USNA Museum. I have never heard or seen of any companion pieces to the Spode dinner plates - unlike your Wedgwood which you note has cups and saucers, etc.

I have yet to see the Museum's china collection. The museum was closed for renovation during our 45th Reunion, and when I returned last month for Pete Featherstone's commital ceremony, the 'china display room' was given over to a display of Patrick O'Brien ship paintings.

I will also forward to you an e-mail I received from Spode which includes a date code chart in MS Word. From this, I realize the set of 12 plates I inherited from my dad (USNA '20) were made in November and December, 1946 - my parents were married in 1934, but must have acquired my set sometime in 1947.

Your classmate,

- Blackie/Mike
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